

Newton Housing Partnership Meeting  
Notes from November 24, 2020 Meeting  
Conference Call Meeting  
5:00-7:00 pm

Meeting summary approved at 12/15/20 mtg.

Partnership Members in Attendance: Mark Caggiano, Eliza Datta, Chuck Eisenberg, John Hennessey, Lizbeth Heyer, Josephine McNeil, Marva Serotkin, Stephen Tise

Others in Attendance: Amanda Berman, Barney Heath, Eamon Bencivengo, members of the community

Summary of the meeting of October 27<sup>th</sup> was approved.

It was announced that Lizbeth Heyer and Chuck Eisenberg will recuse themselves for the discussion about the Armory based on potential conflict of interest.

Newton Housing Partnership Initiatives

- Update from the Subcommittee on extremely low income housing strategy.  
The Subcommittee (Josephine McNeil, Mark Caggiano, Marva Serotkin, Kathi Marchi) did not have any data points to discuss and conversation continues among the members.
- Update from the Subcommittee on Zoning Redesign.  
The Subcommittee (Chuck Eisenberg, Lizbeth Heyer and Eliza Datta) reported on a call with Councilor Deb Crossley. The Councilor is seeking opportunities to support deeply affordable housing through the zoning design process. There is a community meeting scheduled for December 2<sup>nd</sup> to review progress to date and gain insight from community members. The next section of the redesign project will be village centers. The Council has docked a Housing Trust for their next meeting.
- Update on housing's role in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Josephine McNeil and Mark Hennessey met with Amanda Berman, Barney Heath and Eamon Bencivengo to discuss approaches to removing barriers to increasing diversity in housing. There is little data regarding the impact of the 70% preference for Newton residents on selection for low income housing. It was recommended to review a half dozen projects to determine the outcome. The City will hire a consultant to provide data. A decision will need to be made for Riverside, although there is time for review of options.

### Project Updates

- **Armory**

The Partnership undertook an extensive discussion on the Armory project. The JAPG formed to recommend or not the use of the Armory for affordable housing voted to support the City purchase the Armory for \$1 for the purpose of conversion to affordable housing. The JAPG worked with a consulting team from Affirmative Investments. Questions were raised about the process for seeking State and local agreement for this conversion. Affirmative Investments reported that discussion with DCAMM was positive. Eamon Bencivengo shared a chart explaining the decision process. The Partnership learned that the City can return the property to the State if there is no developer for the project. It was Voted by members with Josephine Mc Neil abstaining to support the project for affordable housing. Eliza Datta will testify at the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Real Property Reuse Public Meeting.
- **Newton COVID Emergency Housing Relief Program**

Staff reported that 201 households have received assistance. Those Households starting in July will run out by the end of December. There is serious concern about evictions unless additional funds are Allocated. Currently 1-2 applications are received each week. Josephine McNeil and Lynn Weisberg explained the need for Households to understand the importance of transferring to the Housing Court from District Court after receiving an eviction notice. Josephine McNeil and Lynn Weisberg will develop a statement for Distribution to households at risk. It was moved by Chuck Eisenberg and seconded by Marva Serotkin to support extending the benefits by another six months and notifying the CPC of the vote. Partnership members voted unanimously in favor.

- Analysis of impediments to Fair Housing Report  
A hearing is scheduled for December 7th with a 30 day comment period.

#### Upcoming Meetings

NHP meetings will be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month 6-8pm. The December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting will start at 5pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marva Serotkin